The BELIEFS OF 700 MINISTERS

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THE BELIEFS OF 700 MINISTERS

And Their Meaning for Religious Education

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FOREWORD

THE writer of this monograph is not a theologian. He has no thought of defending or attacking any particular belief or system of beliefs. He neither criticizes nor approves the ministers and students for the ministry, who were kind enough to respond to his questionnaire, for the creeds they hold. His interest in this study of belief is that of the psychologist interested in the religious education of the young.

Happily, the day of the catechism as the chief basis of religious instruction is past. Happily also, the influence of long, complicated formal creeds is waning. But this is not equivalent to saying that belief has no part to play in the religious aspect of experience. Some basic questions concerning God, man, the universe arise in every normal mind and demand answer. To these no answers based on objective proof can be given. The best we can do, if our questions are to be answered and the mind find rest, is to sum up the probabilities and *believe*. Here faith has its rise.

Some of the beliefs carefully taught a few generations ago as settled doctrines of the church are no longer regarded as essential by the mass of Christians. This is not due to indifference or irreligion. It is in considerable part at least the result of the rise of the scientific

mind, which is the product jointly of universal education and the modern emphasis on science.

The essence of scientific method is to demand objective verification of whatever claims to be truth. Nothing is taken for granted, nothing is accepted on unproved authority or subjective testimony. In religion the only proofs are subjective. You cannot prove to another person the quality of your own experience when he does not share it; and no one can entirely share another's experience. In the face of all your claims and assertions he may remain a skeptic. We are accustomed to say that there is no conflict between science and religion. There is a conflict of method. Science says, "I can prove." Religion is forced to say, "I believe." In our schools and colleges to-day the whole system of education follows the method of science, demanding proof.

Religion assumes that important realities exist which lie beyond the range of verification in the objective scientific sense. If we demand proof of these realities other than the testimony of individual consciousness, we in effect deny these realities, since such proof is impossible. Belief based on reasonable probabilities is the only alternative to doubt, skepticism, or indifference. And in the presence of doubt, skepticism or indifference concerning the existence of God and his concern over his universe there can be no religion in the Christian sense.

If it is answered that we have objective proof of the

power of these spiritual realities in the transformation of lives and the reconstruction of society through religion, the reply still is: These transformations and reconstructions are effected through belief. Where such realities are denied, the effects do not follow.

This all leads up to the expression of a conviction that we need to consider anew the help that religious education should give the young in the reaching of a few fundamental beliefs about their universe.

CHAPTER I

PSYCHOLOGICAL NECESSITY FOR RELIGIOUS BELIEF

When "Tay Pay" O'Connor made a recent visit to this country he was on one occasion being entertained at a luncheon given in his honor. "How is Ireland?" asked his host as soup was giving way to roast mallard.

"Oh, Ireland's in a de'il of a way."

"How is that?"

"Well, you see," said O'Connor (mapping out with his finger an imaginary Ireland on the table cloth), "down here we have the Catholics, and up here we have the Protestants, and they're at each other's throats all the time." A pause, then—"I often wish they were all of them haythen so they could live together like Christians."

Why Men Defend Their Beliefs

It is a strange anomaly of human nature which makes men fight over what they believe in religion but cannot prove. For centuries half the world's wars were in defense of creeds whose very nature made proof of their validity impossible. The heat that has flamed about religious beliefs has lighted martyr fires and generated the hatred and intolerance out of which came the rack and the

inquisition. Even to-day anger surges and cruel words flash when religious faiths come in conflict. It is over the undemonstrable that we grow belligerent where religion is concerned.

Why this jealous defense of religious beliefs? Surely, there must be something embedded very deep in human nature that accounts for such violence. Some psychologists tell us that religion itself originally sprang out of fear. Can it be that the fierce impulse to defend our beliefs comes from an instinctive fear of destiny? Do we, like the small boy who in the dark whistles to keep his courage up, assert, reassert, and, if need be, fight for a religious creed in order to relieve a half-conscious dread of the mystery that lies behind the veil?

However much truth there may be in this explanation, it is quite certainly not the whole truth. Just as the one single emotion of fear is insufficient when taken alone to account for the rise of religion, so the fear motive alone does not sufficiently explain our psychological need for belief. There is no one single explanation of our devotion to our beliefs; our motives here, as in other aspects of experience, are an intricate complex. And these motives differ for different persons. They also vary for the same person with his moods or the situations in which he finds himself. The early Christian, harried, hunted, persecuted, despoiled, needed strong faith in a happy future state to compensate for unbearable hardships. Smug,

well-fed, prosperous commercial-minded men of to-day have found in Jesus a prototype of the keen business man and good mixer who knows how to "sell" his idea to his public. The person who knows he has but a few days or weeks to live is more interested in the doctrine of immortality than is the same individual in the early flush of maturity.

Motives which in varying degrees actuate different persons in cherishing or defending their beliefs include the following and probably others not mentioned:

(1) We may defend our beliefs because they appear to us true, and we are moved to defend the truth.

(2) We may look upon ourselves as champions of a cause, defenders of the faith, and may think (to use a term employed by the holy men of the East) that we "acquire merit" by upholding the beliefs of our tribe.

(3) We may be convinced that our eternal salvation depends on our acceptance and promulgation of certain beliefs, which will then naturally become objects of great solicitude.

(4) We may find our beliefs tied up with some prized source of authority, as the Bible or the church, and be possessed of an inflexibility of mind which makes it impossible to let go any time associated with this source without the whole structure tumbling.

(5) It is even possible that we may, without being aware of the fact, cherish our beliefs in part from pride of possession. We have grown up with them and they have become so much a part of our spiritual structure, intellectually and emotionally bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that to drop them now would be like severing a foot or a hand; the mental self would thereby be mutilated and incomplete.

(6) We may hold on to certain beliefs because we have long taught them or defended them, and so are more or less consciously aware that we are expected to continue in them. To deny them now would be to confess error and uncertainty, and the social self would suffer loss of prestige or influence.

(7) Some who have made religion a vocation, sensible of the disciplinary powers of ecclesiastical authority over the individual, may cling to the conventional beliefs of their organization as a self-protective measure while being at the same time hardly aware that this is the source of their motive.

(8) We may prize certain beliefs because we look upon them as guides to conduct, sources which give rise to character and hence vital to the outcome of personality.

Belief a Psychological Necessity

Do our religious beliefs really matter in a concrete and practical way? If we cannot prove a thing is true, is it important whether we believe it to be true? If so, are all our beliefs equally important? And important for what?

Belief is the acceptance without objective proof of what purports to be fact or truth. It is an hypothesis to be tested out in experience. Once a thing is proved there is no longer a place for belief; we then *know.* In the very nature of things the fundamental elements in religion are not capable of objective proof. They must forever remain in the realm of belief. For example, the idea of a Supreme Being lies at the very heart of religion, yet how can one give objective proof of this Being? True, Mr. H. G. Wells tells how the experience of God is a nearer and more vital experience than the presence of a close friend or brother;[1] and multitudes of men and women stand ready to witness to the truth of his testimony. This testimony and its witness may strengthen our belief, but it still is not proof *in the sense of objective verification.* Such testimony may remain a heartening challenge to faith, but not something one can demonstrate to the person who has not had the experience. So also with other basic problems of religion, such as man's origin and

[1] H. G. Wells, *God the Invisible King*, p. 23.

destiny. We can believe, indeed, may find ourselves forced to believe, but we cannot know—at least, yet.

Belief is a psychological necessity to most minds simply because certain insistent and troublesome questions inevitably arise for which we can find no certain answer in the realm of knowledge. Such questions are concerned with areas of experience which appeal to us as of supreme importance. Otherwise the questions could be ignored and left without answer.

God. One such area of experience concerns the idea of God. Does God exist? What is his nature, what his attributes and qualities?

Such questions are natural and inevitable. Even primitive man asks them, not for speculative reasons but for the very practical bearing he conceives their answer to have on his immediate welfare. The young ask such questions. And without an answer to questions about a higher Being there can be no religion. Whatever we may believe to be the nature of God and his relation to man, our faith must accept something conceived as a higher power (or powers) or religion has no part in our experience.

Man. Questions in this area of experience probably developed later in human society than in the God area. They also develop later in this area in the individual. Both primitive man and the child are able to conceive of God as giver, protector, avenger before they are able to think impersonally, that is, speculatively, about themselves.

But both savage and child are able to link the idea of God and of self together in a very concrete and practical way. Both find the universe strange and threatening and too big for their small powers. Both readily believe they can in some way make use of this greater power than theirs to their own advantage. A sense of dependence develops and belief arises.

To every person at certain stages of development, perhaps even most to the child, comes the thought of death. And this thought is very disturbing. Death probably more than any other fact of experience brings man to a sense of his own helplessness and of his need of succor. "If a man die, shall he live again?" "Where does one go when he dies?" asks the young child without prompting. "Will father never be alive again?" inquired a child of five years; the urge toward a future life was rising to expression in him. "Was baby with God before she came to us?" demanded the sister hardly herself more than an infant. Knowledge may fail but the question was of the stuff out of which belief springs. Except for dull, brutish minds such questions must needs arise, and their answer must wait on faith alone; provable knowledge has no help to give.

The universe. "I sometimes wonder whether there is a God," said a young man, "but all this stuff—the earth, animals, plants, stars, planets, ourselves—is here and where did it come from?" If one rejects the idea of God,

he still has the universe (including himself) to account for. If he accepts the idea of God, he then has on his hands the question of God's relation to this universe. Mr. Wells accepts for himself the God he feels and recognizes inside himself, the personal God closer than friend or brother; but he rejects the possibility of this benign and friendly deity being responsible for physical nature with its suffering and cruelties, its "natural selection" and its "survival of the fittest." Mr. Wells is still confronted with the question, What then?

Reduced to the lowest minimum, there are at least three fields, three areas of experience, in which all thinking persons must and do ask questions which demand some kind of answer:

(1) Is there a God? Who, what kind, where?

(2) Whence came, whither goes man?

(3) What has God to do with the running of our lives and the universe?

Reason, speculation, may point toward conclusions on these questions, but no objectively verifiable facts are available. In order to find some resting place for the mind and save emotional strain, belief arises from reason and speculation and gives some kind of answer.

What areas or categories of belief are important to the individual may perhaps best be considered from the standpoint of the services which religion renders. In the broadest terms these are three:

(1) Religion serves the individual by adding to his serenity of mind; giving him hope, sense of security, happiness.

(2) Religion defines a way of life, outlines a system of ethics, provides certain norms for conduct, sets up ideals.

(3) Religion motivates chosen lines of conduct, supplies the drives for the pursuit of ideals, gives fortitude to withstand hardship.

It would seem, then, that those beliefs would be most important which touch these three functional aspects of religion: beliefs which contribute to personal satisfaction, serenity, hope, happiness; which help in determining ideals of conduct; which act upon the deeper sources of motives capable of shaping conduct. Belief is called for in certain areas of experience because religion relates itself to problems upon which the normal mind, even the young mind, must now and then dwell and for which it urgently demands a solution—if not in proved knowledge, then in reasonable faith. If answer is not given, or if the answer given contradicts accepted facts or beliefs, then mental strain results, inconsistencies are felt, the personality fails of the integration necessary to proper development or functioning.

(1) Consider for example the relation which one's concept of God may have to mental poise and serenity of outlook on life. If no God is conceived, then one finds

himself in the midst of forces which are relentless and terrible, and faces an end which can hardly be contemplated with equanimity. If belief accepts the existence of God but pictures him as cruel, capricious, vengeful or as mere impersonal creative energy, this belief can add little and may even subtract much from human happiness. Primitive belief in a God who needed constantly to be placated and humored surely adds untold worry and tension to lives already none too easy. On the other hand, the Christian concept of God as Father and Friend has contributed beyond measure to the sense of security and well-being. If we believe that "God's in his heaven" and "all's right with the world," we shall be happier in our world. But if we believe that God created us in his own image, and yet to satisfy the demands of cold legal justice will allow us to suffer eternally in indescribable torment, there may be introduced into the mind a contradictory and disintegrating factor which is psychologically harmful.

(2) Religion (and therefore belief) has a direct bearing on behavior and conduct. All religions reflect the cultural level and ethical practices of their time and in turn react powerfully on social culture and practice. The part played by the quality of our beliefs in this connection is evident. If we believe that our deity approves of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, the response is natural and easy. If we believe that God himself practices vengeance, it is not hard to convince

ourselves that we may take revenge. If we believe we are taught by Jesus to forgive our enemies and do good to those that hate us, this will help us to accept a rather difficult standard of conduct for ourselves. If we believe that Jesus met his problems of living with powers and equipment similar to our own except in degree, then we may be induced to accept our obligation to try to live up to his standard. If, on the other hand, we believe that Jesus used supernatural powers of a kind we do not possess, and that he was in some unique way hedged about by divinity, then we may conclude that he was not in all points tempted as we are, and that it is not fair to expect his standard from us.

(3) Great difference exists among religions as to the degree in which they act as a conduct control. A part of this difference comes from the character of the dominant beliefs. Beliefs which ascribe to the accepted deity the rôle of punisher and avenger may control conduct through fear, a motive which is never constructive and ennobling. Beliefs which conceive the Supreme Being as a friendly, loving, personal Deity so concerned over the welfare of his children that the very hairs of their heads are numbered have the power to motivate conduct through loyalty, devotion, love. If belief pictures the Divine Person incarnated in human form and living a perfect life as a model for his followers then the devotion may become the controlling motive in life, making its possessor

capable of withstanding any hardships or persecutions so that he may follow in the footsteps of his Ideal.

A word of summary at this point. We have seen that some form of religious belief is the mind's natural and inevitable response to certain insistent questions sure to arise in normal minds—questions which cannot be answered from verifiable knowledge. The only alternative to the formation of beliefs is to drop the troublesome questions out of the mind, simply to quit thinking about them, giving them up because they are insoluble. But this is just what man, perhaps because he is man, will not do. Search for the answer to the riddle of life and the universe will go on. The quest for ultimate cause and explanation will not cease, even in common minds. Man, nearly all men, will be forever looking for and thinking about God. These questions tend to center in three great areas of experience having to do with God, the self, and the universe about us. The form taken by beliefs within these areas has a vital bearing on three types of service which religion renders; namely, on the amount of personal satisfaction received by the individual from his religion, the norms of conduct he accepts, the motivation of his conduct in the direction of these norms.

How Shall We Know What to Believe?

As a part of their religious education the young should be guided in arriving at certain helpful beliefs. This does

not mean that we should teach them a catechism of doctrines. It does not mean that we should have them commit and recite creeds. It does not necessarily mean that we should teach them any formal statement of belief. It means, rather, that by their whole curriculum of instruction, by the atmosphere and teachings of the pulpit, the church classroom, and the home we should gradually lead them into the few basic beliefs necessary to their own best development in Christian living. Just what, then, should these beliefs be to which we should lead our children about God, about man and his destiny, about the universe? This question I dare not, of course, attempt to answer in detail. I only know what beliefs seem to me for myself most true and helpful. When I turn to the older systems of doctrines and the creeds for an answer, there is something musty about them. Most of their forms of thought belong to another culture than ours; they do not answer my question. One may go to the Bible, but men read the Bible differently, and out of these differences in reading conflicting creeds have sprung. So the problem is not as simple as it seems.

Then it occurs to me that in our Christian clergy we may find the answer. For when we desire answer to a problem in science we go to the scientists. When we meet a problem in law we seek the jurists; in medicine, the physicians. In the clergy we have the great professional class of religionists, the men who make religion a

vocation and who claim to speak with something more than uncritical authority on matters of faith. Surely, if one would know what one may believe on deep questions of religion this is the place to go for guidance. Surely, our Christian ministers should know what beliefs should be taught the young. Skilled in interpreting the Scriptures as they are, and knowing as they do what the wise men have taught of the verities in their pages, they will agree on the great basic truths of religion and we of their flock, noting this agreement will, know ourselves what to believe and what beliefs to teach the young.

Something akin to this line of reasoning prompted me to put these assumptions to the test. All formal creeds aside, what do the ministers of our churches believe? Do they agree in the main on their beliefs within a single denomination? Do the denominations agree with each other on the great fundamental matters of the Christian faith? Can we of the masses find in our spiritual leaders a certainty of belief on the crucial questions of religion such as warrants our trusting their insight? On Sunday mornings the minister leads us of the congregation in a confession of belief called the Apostles' Creed. Does he expect and desire us to believe the assertions of this creed? Does he himself believe them? What, in short, have the clergy to teach us about belief *by the simple and concrete method of telling us what they themselves believe?*

To answer this question about fifteen hundred Protestant ministers were asked for a statement of their religious beliefs. Seven hundred complied, five hundred of these being ministers in charge of churches and two hundred being students in several theological schools. The next chapter will set forth the results of this inquiry.

CHAPTER II

THE CLERGY AS A GUIDE TO BELIEF

In order to secure from ministers a statement of their beliefs a list of fifty-six questions was prepared covering the questions of creed judged to be most prominent in Protestant ecclestiastical circles. In the formulation of these questions the writer had the assistance of a dozen or more scholars critically trained in the field of Bible and theology.[1]

Five Hundred Ministers Report Their Beliefs

Belief may be of all degrees of certainty from the faintest suspicion of the truth of a proposition to absolute conviction of its validity. Because of this the questionnaire was shaped to make it possible to state five degrees running from "positive certainty" of belief, through "moderate certainty" and "undecided," on to "moderate certainty" of disbelief, and "positive certainty" of disbelief. In order to simplify this report the returns are summed up under the three heads: "Belief," "Uncertainty," and "Disbelief," the two degrees of belief and of disbelief respectively being thrown together.

This inquiry was sent to 1,309 ministers in service, of whom 500 returned replies; and to five theological schools,

[1] Special indebtedness is acknowledged to C. W. Longman and to H. J. Lord, who devoted much time to the preparation of the questions.

from which 200 returns were received. The ministers in service represent twenty denominations in Chicago and the area thirty or forty miles outside. The five theological schools represent three large denominations and are widely separated in location. Some of the theological students were also serving pulpits.

In the first group of 500 the distribution of numbers among the denominations was as follows: Baptist, 50; Congregational, 50; Episcopalian, 30; Evangelical, 49; Lutheran, 104; Methodist, 111; Presbyterian, 63; all others (13 denominations), 43. To save any possible embarrassment to denominations or institutions the names of the theological schools (see page 52), and their denominations are withheld.

The questions in the table which follows are the exact questions of the questionnaire with a slight abbreviation here and there to save space. It is to be observed that these statements are very brief and therefore in some cases at least incomplete and so imperfect formulations of the purported truth. Some of the respondents, recognizing this, appended to their checked answers their own interpretations of certain terms or statements. Because of this limitation we are not justified in accepting identical checked answers as meant to convey identical shadings of belief. Only broad general concepts can be dealt with in this wholesale way. Percents are stated to the nearest whole number. The table should be read:

Point 1.—100% of the 500 ministers believe that God exists.

Point 2.—80% believe that God is three distinct Persons in one; 7% are uncertain; 13% disbelieve the statement.

TABLE I. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
1. That God exists?	100	0	0
2. That God is three distinct persons in one?	80	7	13
3. That God is omnipotent?	87	4	9
4. That the relation of God to man is best expressed in the word "Father"?	98	1	1
5. That God is unchangeable?	79	9	12
6. That the idea of evolution is consistent with belief in God as Creator?	61	6	33
7. That the creation of the world occurred in the manner and time recorded in Genesis?	47	5	48
8. That God leaves the universe wholly to the control of law without controlling it in person?	10	6	84
9. That the idea of evolution is a denial of man's having been created by God in his own image?	33	4	63
10. That God occasionally sets aside law, thus performing a miracle?	68	8	24
11. That pain and suffering were provided by God for our good?	50	14	36
12. That the devil exists as an actual being?	60	7	33
13. That God is a Being with personal attributes, complete and perfect in all moral qualities?	95	1	4
14. That in Bible times God manifested himself to persons in a manner which no longer occurs?	56	6	38

TABLE I. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
15. That the Bible was written by men chosen and supernaturally endowed by God for that purpose, and by him given the exact message they were to write?	55	2	43
16. That the New Testament is, and always will remain, the final revelation of the will of God to men?	66	10	24
17. That if any part of the Bible should be found to be in conflict with the spirit and teachings of Jesus it should be rejected as not binding on us?	77	4	19
18. That the Old Testament prophets had divinely inspired knowledge by which they were able to predict future events?	67	5	28
19. That Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were literally fulfilled in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus?	72	4	24
20. That the inspiration that resulted in the writing of the Bible is different from that of other great religious literature?	70	5	25
21. That every part of the Bible is of equal validity and authority with every other part?	34	4	62
22. That the Bible is wholly free from legend or myth?	38	7	55
23. That the principles of criticism and evaluation applied to other literature and history should be applied to the Bible?	67	5	28
24. That the New Testament is the absolute and infallible standard by which all religious creeds or beliefs among men should be judged as to their truth and validity?	77	3	20
25. That the selection and collection of the sacred books known as the Bible was by the direct will and authority of God, and is infallibly correct as determining what should be the content of the Bible?	54	8	38

TABLE I. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
26. That Jesus was born of a virgin without a human father?	71	10	19
27. That Jesus, while upon earth, was as truly subject to temptation as were other men?	97	1	2
28. That in his life upon earth Jesus met all his problems and difficulties using only those powers and resources available to other men?	74	6	20
29. That Jesus lived a life wholly blameless and without sin or wrongdoing?	92	4	4
30. That Jesus is equal in power, knowledge, and authority with God?	76	5	19
31. That Jesus, when upon earth, was subject to limitations of knowledge about the earth and scientific facts in general, characteristic of his day?	58	9	33
32. That while upon earth Jesus possessed and used the power to restore the dead to life?	82	9	9
33. That Jesus' death on the cross was the one act which made possible the remission of man's sins?	70	6	24
34. That after Jesus was dead and buried he actually rose from the dead, leaving the tomb empty?	84	4	12
35. That after a period had elapsed following his death and resurrection Jesus was seen by his disciples and friends ascending into heaven?	84	6	10
36. That Jesus is now interceding with the Father for us?	82	8	10
37. That heaven exists as an actual place or location?	57	15	28
38. That hell exists as an actual place or location?	53	13	34

TABLE I. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
39. That there is a continuance of life after death?	97	2	1
40. In the resurrection of the body?	62	5	33
41. That a considerable part of the human race will suffer eternal punishment because of their rejection of Christ?	61	9	30
42. That each person's status for eternity is forever fixed and determined by his spiritual status at the time of his death?	58	12	30
43. That Jesus will come again to judge all mankind, both living and dead?	66	7	27
44. That there will be one final day of judgment for all who have lived upon earth?	60	8	32
45. That death and suffering were brought into the world by the disobedience of Adam and Eve?	60	4	36
46. In a visible bodily second coming of Jesus to establish a reign of righteousness on earth?	40	11	49
47. That man was originally in a state of complete moral perfection which he lost by his disobedience and fall?	61	6	33
48. That forgiveness of sin is essential and required for one to be in right relationship to God?	98	1	1
49. That all men, being sons of Adam, are born with natures wholly perverse, sinful, and depraved?	53	4	43
50. That prayer has the power to change conditions in nature—such as drought?	64	11	25
51. That prayer for others directly affects their lives whether or not they know that such prayer is being offered?	83	9	8

TABLE I. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
52. That God now acts upon, or operates in, human lives through the agency and person of the Holy Spirit?	94	1	5
53. That in order to become a Christian it is necessary and essential to participate in the sacraments, such as baptism or the Lord's Supper?	44	5	51
54. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus?	46	4	50
55. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to belong to the church?	44	6	50
56. That regardless of creed or personal belief persons who love God and do justly with their fellow men are worthy of acceptance into the Christian Church?	56	5	39

MAIN TRENDS SHOWN

Considering the replies under the groups or concepts into which they naturally fall, certain main tendencies of belief are plainly evident in this clerical group.

God. All the ministers believe in the existence of God, but only 87% of them believe that he is omnipotent. God is best represented by "Father" rather than "Judge" to practically all. The idea of evolution evidently extends to God himself in the minds of many preachers, for only 79% believe that God is unchangeable. Of Con-

gregationalists less than half (48%) hold this belief, but of Lutherans practically all (98%) accept it. Methodists come in between, two out of three holding to the belief with 18% uncertain. Eighty per cent of Presbyterians and the same of Baptists believe in an unchanging God.

Nearly all believe that God takes a hand directly in the present running of the world, only 16% believing that he leaves it to the control of law alone. The Congregationalists and the Methodists each have 17% who take the latter view, while about one minister out of eight is uncertain on this question.

All Episcopalians and more than 90% of all other denominations except Congregationalists (81%) believe in a God with personal attributes and perfect moral qualities. A few disbelieve or are uncertain on this point.

The Trinity. No denomination represented has ministers all of whom believe that God is three distinct Persons in one, though the Lutherans approach this total with 99% and the Episcopalians with 96%. Nearly two thirds of the Congregational ministers (64%) refuse to think of God as a Trinity, as do more than one fourth of the Methodist (28%). Of the Baptists and the Evangelical group 14% and 12% respectively reject the trinitarian view. About one Presbyterian preacher out of five (22%) either refuses to believe in a tri-person God, or confesses uncertainty on the question.

As guided by our ministers what, then, shall we teach

our children about God? Evidently quite contradictory things. The one thing we could be sure of is that God exists. If we teach that God is a Person, we shall be in agreement with the large majority but have against us an appreciable number. We shall not be able to say that God is omnipotent or that he is unchangeable, as the older creeds teach us. The belief that God cares about the sparrows that fall to the ground or that he numbers the hairs of our heads cannot be taught without contradicting the belief or encountering the uncertainty of nearly one minister out of six. On whether God in Bible times manifested himself in a manner which no longer occurs the clergy divide so nearly evenly that we receive practically no help.

Jesus. The place of Jesus in Christianity is subject to wide differences of belief.

The virgin birth is not accepted by all the ministers of any of the denominations, the most orthodox on this point being the Lutherans with 90%. Only one out of four Congregational preachers accepts the virgin birth, as against three out of four of the Episcopalians and four out of five of the Evangelicals and the Baptists. More than two thirds (69%) of the Presbyterians and over half (54%) of the Methodists believe in the virgin birth.

There is very general belief (over 90%) among ministers of all denominations that Jesus while on earth was tempted just as other men are. Only half the Lutheran group

believe that he met his life problems using only the powers and resources available to other men. About four out of five of the other denominations accept this point of view.

Not all ministers believe that Jesus lived a life wholly free from sin and wrongdoing. One fifth of the Congregationalist preachers refuse this view, and one seventh confess uncertainty. Those of all other denominations show above 90% (but none 100%) who believe that Jesus lived a wholly blameless life.

Whether Jesus is God's equal in power, knowledge, and authority is a question on which ministers differ greatly, nearly two thirds (64%) of the Congregational group rejecting this view, while 97% of the Lutheran and 92% of the Episcopalian group accept it. Those of other denominations fall between these two extremes.

Half of the Baptists and three fourths of the Congregationalists and Episcopalians believe that Jesus when upon earth was subject to limitations in his knowledge about the earth and scientific facts as were others of his time. Two out of five Lutherans take the same position, as do more than three out of five of the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Evangelical pastors.

Less than half of the Congregationalists of this group believe that Jesus restored the dead to life, though about one fourth express uncertainty about this claim. Practically all Lutheran and Evangelical and eighty-five out

of one hundred Baptist ministers accept the Bible story on this point, which is rejected by 17% and rated as uncertain by 13% of the Methodist group. Nearly two fifths (36%) of Congregational preachers disbelieve that Jesus rose from the dead, leaving an empty tomb, and 7% more have reached no conviction on the question. All Episcopalians and Lutherans included in this study accept the claim of Jesus' physical resurrection, while the Methodists register 74%, the Baptists 82% and the Presbyterians 86% holding this belief.

In what sense was Jesus the Saviour of mankind? Whether Jesus' death on the cross was the one act which made remission of sin possible is subject to widely differing belief. Only one fifth of the Congregational, three fifths of the Methodist and three fourths of the Baptist clergy take this view. On this as on most other beliefs, the Lutherans are most unified, 99% accepting this meaning of the atonement. About two thirds of the Presbyterians (67%) and Episcopalians (68%) subscribe to this belief, as do four fifths (78%) of the Evangelicals.

If we follow our ministers we will then have to present to our children two quite different pictures of Jesus. Which shall we take?

One picture. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of a virgin; is equal with God in place, power, and knowledge; he lived upon earth a sinless life; he worked miracles, bringing the dead back to life and

himself rose again from the dead with a physical body; his death on the cross alone made possible the remission of our sins; he will come again in visible form to judge the quick and the dead.

Another picture. He was conceived and born as other men are; he was not wholly free in his earthly life from moral wrong; he neither raised others from the dead nor himself rose from the dead in physical form; in his earthly life he was subject to the limitations of knowledge and science which applied to his day; man's redemption does not rest alone on his suffering and death; he will not appear in a second visible coming upon earth.

The Bible. The Bible is not to all our clergy a book of unique wisdom and inspiration. Nearly all Lutherans (98%) accept the view that the Bible was written by men chosen by God and by him supernaturally endowed for the purpose. But less than two out of three of the next highest groups (Evangelicals, 66%; Baptists, 62%) take this position, while the Congregationalists number but 15% and the Methodists 30% who hold the belief. Only slightly higher proportions apply for the belief that the New Testament is and will remain the final revelation of the will of God to man, the remainder evidently accepting the view of a progressive revelation or discovery—essentially the idea of social evolution applied to religion. About one third of the ministers reject or are uncertain

about the Old Testament prophets having divinely inspired knowledge by which they were able to predict future events. Practically all of the Lutherans (99%), but only 32% of the Congregationalists and 44% of the Methodists believe such a claim, the remaining denominations coming between these two extremes. Less than three out of four (72%) believe that the birth, life, and death of Jesus were foretold.

One minister out of four denies that the inspiration which resulted in the writing of the Bible was any different from that of other great religious literature, a point of view which does away with scriptural infallibility. Belief in unique inspiration was, denominationally: Lutherans, 98%; Evangelicals and Baptists, 70%; Episcopalians, 68%; Presbyterians, 66%; Methodists, 53%; Congregationalists, 40%.

Two ministers out of three refuse to believe that all parts of the Bible are of equal validity and authority and less than two out of five believe it to be free from myth. Two thirds of all are willing to have the same principles of criticism and interpretation applied to the Bible that are used with other literature and history. Somewhat more than half (54%) of all accept the collection of sacred books called the Bible as a canon determined by the direct will and authority of God, this position being taken by 89% of the Lutherans, by two thirds of the Baptists and Evangelicals, by half of the Presbyterians,

and so on down to the Congregationalists, who muster only 12% for this point of view.

Supposing the creed of the minister should govern the teaching of belief in the Sunday school of his church, here are some of the points of view a child would obtain about the Bible if he went to the schools in succession:

First School	Second School
The Bible contains the exact words of God, set down by writers chosen and inspired by him.	The Bible is not a book of unique truth and inspiration, but was written as other great literature is written, by men who were subject to error of knowledge and understanding.
The Bible contains a complete revelation of spiritual truth complete for all men for all time.	The Bible is not the complete and final revelation of spiritual truth.
The Bible is to be taken literally, as equally true in all its parts.	The Bible contains myths and legends and is not to be taken literally in all its parts.

The universe. These ministers are quite evenly divided in their acceptance or denial of the doctrine of evolution. Less than half (47%) accept the Genesis account of creation, the proportion running down to 11% of Episcopalians, 12% of Congregationalists, 24% of Methodists and rising to 35% of Presbyterians, 53% of Evangelicals, 63% of Baptists and 89% of Lutherans. Two thirds of

the whole agree that to accept the doctrine would not be a denial of man's having been created in the image of God.

Is the world run by inexorable, impersonal and unchanging law, or does God occasionally set aside the orderly processes of law, thus performing a miracle? Two out of three ministers (68%) believe that God does thus break in upon the working of law for special purposes. Eight per cent more are uncertain, leaving only 24% who are against this view. At this point perhaps more than any other in religion the beliefs of the clergy run counter to the teachings of science in the schools, where the unbroken reign of law is one of the basic assumptions. Ninety-eight per cent of Lutherans stand for miracles, as against Evangelicals, 73%; Episcopalians, 67%; Baptists, 64%; Presbyterians, 57%; Methodists, 55%, and Congregationalists, 43%.

It is evident that consistency does not compel all those who accept the scientific view of creation to carry the concept which this implies over into the operation of the universe. Not only does disagreement and uncertainty among the clergy make their leadership uncertain in this field, but their refusal to accept the principle of unvarying law makes it difficult for youth with a present-day education to follow the majority belief.

Sin, and evil. The responsibility of Adam and Eve for death and suffering in the world as a result of their disobedience is a literal fact to 60% of the ministers

(Lutherans, 97%; Evangelicals, 77%; Baptists, 72%; Episcopalians, 50%; Presbyterians, 47%; Methodists, 34%; Congregationalists, 17%). More than half believe that man was originally in a state of moral perfection which he lost through a fall by Adam, and that all men, being sons of Adam, are born with natures wholly perverse, sinful, and depraved. The acceptance of this uncomfortable point of view, while at the same time welcoming the doctrine of evolution, gives point to George Bernard Shaw's thrust that the "rarest thing in nature" is the man who, having accepted a new idea, is either willing or able to make the reconstruction in the remainder of his mental equipment which the new idea necessitates.

Only one minister out of three denies the belief that Satan is an actual being abroad in the world, 7% more being uncertain on the point. Three out of five of this group of the clergy are not fighting any intangible thing like "powers of darkness" or "spirit of evil," but are able to postulate as a target a very concrete and assailable devil.

Prayer. Two thirds (64%) of the clergy of this group believe that prayer has the power to change conditions of nature, such as those producing rain. One out of four disbelieves in this control by prayer and 10% confess uncertainty. A larger proportion (87%) believe that prayer for others directly affects their lives, only 8% doubting on this point with 9% uncertain.

On the matter of prayer the Lutherans are most consistent of the denominations, 94% believing equally in the power of prayer to control nature or human lives. Differences in belief in prayer to control nature or affect the life of the one prayed for is shown by denominations as follows: Baptists—*nature*, 78%; *life*, 96%; Evangelicals —*nature*, 69%; *life*, 83%; Presbyterians—*nature*, 57%, *life*, 87%; Episcopalians—*nature*, 61%; *life*, 89%; Methodists—*nature*, 46%; *life*, 72%; Congregationalists—*nature*, 17%; *life*, 64%.

Future life, rewards, punishment. If the faith of this group of the Protestant clergy is a guide we may believe in a future life. Ninety-seven per cent of our group profess conviction on this point. Less than two thirds, however, (62%), believe in the resurrection of the body as set forth in the Apostles' Creed (Lutherans, 97%; Baptists, 73%; Methodists, 42%; Congregationalists, 19%). Three out of five believe: that a considerable part of the human race will suffer eternal punishment because of their rejection of Christ; that each person's status for eternity is forever fixed by his spiritual condition or status at the time of his death; and that there will be one final judgment day for all who have lived upon earth.

Heaven exists as an actual place or location for about three fifths (57%) of the clergy, but is denied in this form by more than one fourth (28%), the remainder being unable to reach a conclusion. Hell exists as an actual

place or location to a slightly smaller proportion (53%, with 34% denying and 13% uncertain).

From this analysis it is evident that our Protestant clergy do not believe alike on most matters ordinarily considered basic in Christianity. Not only do they differ radically as to the nature of God and his relations to man and the universe, but also as to the nature and mission of Jesus and the authority of the Bible. They are somewhat evenly divided on the question of evolution and its bearing on man's nature. More than half are willing to accept the biblical account of miracles, but there is a stubborn one third who deny their truth or are unconvinced of it. Some would have us teach our children that there is a personal Satan abroad in the world, but others would teach the opposite. Nearly all agree on a future life, but an appreciable minority have no belief in a resurrection of the body.

We shall not be able to follow clerical guidance about the Adam and Eve story as accounting for the origin of sin, suffering, and death in the world, for the preachers are too evenly divided between belief and disbelief. Nor shall we learn from them (in mass) what to teach about prayer, or the sacraments; for here again they differ widely.

Possibly, however, we shall find sufficiently common agreement of belief within each denomination so that

those of any particular religious body will find a sufficient weight of authority to be convincing. Let us examine briefly the returns from the questionnaire and see if this is true.

Belief Within Denominations

The degree to which unity of belief exists within the individual denominations is shown in Table II. This means that out of the 56 items on the questionnaire 80% or more of Lutherans agreed in either belief or disbelief on 44 items; Episcopalians on 25 out of the 56 items, and so on.

Table II. Number of Points (from the original 56 items) on Which 80% or More of the Ministers agree in either Belief or Disbelief.

Lutherans	44 out of 56 items
Episcopalians	25 " " " "
Evangelicals	21 " " " "
Presbyterians	19 " " " "
Baptists	16 " " " "
Congregationalists	14 " " " "
Methodists	11 " " " "

The table makes it evident that Lutherans as represented in this study show the greatest unity of belief and Methodists least. Only one denomination (Lutheran) of the seven musters 80% of their clergy in agreement on one half of the questions. Methodists and Con-

gregationalists show 80% in agreement on only one fifth and one fourth of the items respectively. The points on which Lutherans differ most are evolution, the meaning of pain and suffering, biblical criticism, the resources of Jesus in meeting his earthly problems, the second coming of Jesus. The points on which Methodists show closest agreement are: the existence of God, his Fatherhood and his personal qualities, the resources of Jesus in meeting his problems, need for forgiveness of sin, continuance of life after death.

From this showing within denominations one conclusion can be reached: *No denomination except perhaps the Lutherans has any right to demand that fixed creeds shall be taught the young.* For the clergy of any denomination themselves do not subscribe to a common creed beyond belief in the existence of a God.

Those who desire a more detailed comparison of denominations in matters of belief are referred to Table III which follows. The table should be read: *Point 1*, 100% of all denominations agree that God exists. *Point 2*, That God is three distinct persons in one is believed by 86% of Baptists, 36% of Congregationalists, 96% of Episcopalians (and so on). On this question 5% of Baptists, 13% of Congregationalists, 0% of Episcopalians (and so on) are uncertain. This statement is disbelieved by 9% of Baptists, 51% of Congregationalists, 4% of Episcopalians (and so on).

TABLE III. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION, SHOWN BY DENOMINATIONS

DO YOU BELIEVE—	BAPTIST			CONGREGATIONAL			EPISCOPALIAN			EVANGELICAL			LUTHERAN			METHODIST			PRESBYTERIAN			ALL OTHERS		
	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1. That God exists?	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	100	0	0
2. That God is three distinct persons in one?	86	5	9	36	13	51	96	0	4	88	7	5	99	0	1	72	9	19	78	14	8	82	3	15
3. That God is omnipotent?	89	0	11	61	10	29	93	7	0	100	0	0	100	0	0	75	7	18	91	5	4	83	2	15
4. That the relation of God to man is best expressed in the word "Father"?	98	0	2	98	0	2	100	0	0	100	0	0	96	4	0	100	0	0	98	0	2	95	0	5
5. That God is unchangeable?	80	7	13	48	15	37	92	8	0	88	12	0	98	1	1	66	18	16	78	4	18	85	8	7
6. That the idea of evolution is consistent with belief in God as Creator?	44	13	43	91	2	7	96	4	0	60	5	35	20	5	75	82	4	14	82	5	13	31	8	61
7. That the creation of the world occurred in the manner and time recorded in Genesis?	63	7	30	12	0	88	11	4	85	53	2	45	89	4	7	24	9	67	35	7	58	60	8	32
8. That God leaves the universe wholly to the control of law without controlling it in person?	11	0	89	17	15	68	0	14	86	10	5	85	2	1	97	17	8	75	9	5	86	8	5	87
9. That the idea of evolution is a denial of man's having been created by God in his own image?	46	7	47	7	2	91	7	4	89	37	3	60	71	2	27	18	4	78	11	4	85	43	5	52
10. That God occasionally sets aside law, thus performing a miracle?	64	14	22	43	12	45	67	11	22	73	10	17	98	0	2	55	10	35	57	14	29	77	5	18
11. That pain and suffering were provided by God for our good?	59	11	30	40	21	39	47	21	32	43	22	35	67	6	27	41	12	47	44	17	39	61	13	26
12. That the Devil exists as an actual being?	68	0	32	17	10	73	46	21	33	71	10	19	97	2	1	35	11	54	55	11	34	77	0	23
13. That God is a being with personal attributes, complete and perfect in all moral qualities?	93	4	3	81	2	17	96	0	0	100	0	0	98	0	2	95	2	3	96	0	4	97	0	3
14. That in Bible times God manifested himself to persons in a manner which no longer occurs?	72	2	26	22	9	69	26	11	63	53	10	37	91	6	3	36	2	62	43	7	50	71	3	26

15. That the Bible was written by men chosen and supernaturally endowed by God for that purpose, and by him given the exact message they were to write?	62	0	38	15	0	85	40	0	60	66	0	34	98	1	1	30	4	66	44	4	52	73	0	27
16. That the New Testament is, and always will remain, the final revelation of the will of God to men?	67	4	29	26	7	67	54	18	28	68	22	10	99	0	1	54	10	36	60	16	24	83	7	10
17. That if any part of the Bible should be found to be in conflict with the spirit and teachings of Jesus it should be rejected as not binding on us?	67	8	25	79	2	19	82	4	14	76	3	21	79	4	17	77	5	18	84	4	12	77	0	23
18. That the Old Testament prophets had divinely inspired knowledge by which they were able to predict future events?	78	4	18	32	5	63	52	11	37	78	10	12	99	1	0	44	7	49	68	2	30	78	3	19
19. That Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were literally fulfilled in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus?	78	0	22	29	7	64	74	7	19	90	0	10	99	0	1	55	4	41	69	11	20	80	3	17
20. That the inspiration that resulted in the writing of the Bible is different from that of other great religious literature?	78	4	18	40	7	53	68	11	21	78	2	20	98	1	1	53	7	40	66	5	29	80	0	20
21. That every part of the Bible is of equal validity and authority with every other part?	57	4	39	5	0	95	15	0	85	29	7	64	75	1	24	8	5	87	17	6	77	62	3	35
22. That the Bible is wholly free from legend or myth?	56	9	35	7	0	93	11	0	89	37	17	46	79	6	15	13	7	80	18	9	73	65	8	27
23. That the principles of criticism and evaluation applied to other literature and history should be applied to the Bible?	61	0	39	77	5	18	82	7	11	61	12	27	45	7	48	78	5	17	79	4	17	56	5	39
24. That the New Testament is the absolute and infallible standard by which all religious creeds or beliefs among men should be judged as to their truth and validity?	80	0	20	43	3	54	59	11	30	85	0	15	99	0	1	67	6	27	78	5	17	79	0	21
25. That the selection and collection of the sacred books known as the Bible was by the direct will and authority of God, and is infallibly correct as determining what should be the content of the Bible?	69	7	24	12	2	86	39	7	54	67	3	30	89	8	3	30	10	60	50	15	35	70	3	27

TABLE III. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION, SHOWN BY DENOMINATIONS

DO YOU BELIEVE—	BAPTIST			CONGREGATIONAL			EPISCOPALIAN			EVANGELICAL			LUTHERAN			METHODIST			PRESBYTERIAN			ALL OTHERS		
	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
26. That Jesus was born of a virgin without a human father?	80	9	11	24	15	61	75	14	11	80	12	8	98	2	0	54	13	33	69	13	18	80	5	15
27. That Jesus, while upon earth, was as truly subject to temptation as were other men?	98	0	2	91	5	4	97	0	3	95	5	0	99	1	0	100	0	0	98	2	0	97	3	0
28. That in his life upon earth Jesus met all his problems and difficulties using only those powers and resources available to other men?	79	5	16	79	7	14	81	0	19	73	10	17	51	8	41	86	4	10	83	8	9	62	8	30
29. That Jesus lived a life wholly blameless and without sin or wrongdoing?	91	7	2	79	14	7	96	0	4	95	0	5	99	0	1	91	4	5	95	2	3	90	5	5
30. That Jesus is equal in power, knowledge, and authority with God?	76	4	20	36	5	59	92	8	0	84	3	13	97	0	3	60	12	28	86	4	10	83	5	12
31 That Jesus, when upon earth, was subject to limitations of knowledge about the earth and scientific facts in general, characteristic of his day?	48	11	41	76	0	24	74	11	15	63	13	24	42	7	51	69	9	22	65	11	24	30	14	56
32. That while upon earth Jesus possessed and used the power to restore the dead to life?	85	7	8	49	27	24	93	7	0	98	2	0	98	1	1	70	13	17	84	14	2	85	5	10
33. That Jesus' death on the cross was the one act which made possible the remission of man's sins?	75	2	23	20	5	75	68	21	11	78	7	15	99	0	1	60	9	31	67	4	29	77	5	18
34. That after Jesus was dead and buried he actually rose from the dead, leaving the tomb empty?	82	7	11	57	7	36	100	0	0	92	2	6	100	0	0	74	7	19	86	4	10	83	5	12

35. That after a period had elapsed following his death and resurrection Jesus was seen by his disciples and friends ascending into heaven?	87	2	11	60	8	32	100	0	0	93	5	2	100	0	0	71	12	17	82	7	11	85	8	7
36. That Jesus is now interceding with the Father for us?	84	2	14	41	21	38	89	7	4	95	3	2	100	0	0	74	12	14	87	8	5	77	10	13
37. That heaven exists as an actual place or location?	65	16	19	27	22	51	36	12	52	71	15	14	80	8	12	40	22	38	57	14	29	73	7	20
38. That hell exists as an actual place or location?	64	16	20	14	17	69	27	19	54	63	15	22	80	9	11	41	13	46	44	17	39	70	8	22
39. That there is a continuance of life after death?	100	0	0	95	3	2	100	0	0	98	2	0	100	0	0	94	3	3	98	2	0	95	3	2
40. In the resurrection of the body?	73	2	25	19	8	73	57	7	36	76	0	24	97	0	3	42	9	49	50	9	41	73	8	19
41. That a considerable part of the human race will suffer eternal punishment because of their rejection of Christ?	76	0	24	22	7	71	32	12	56	73	10	17	97	2	1	41	16	43	55	17	28	68	10	22
42. That each person's status for eternity is forever fixed and determined by his spiritual status at the time of his death?	74	0	26	27	15	58	14	14	72	63	20	17	94	4	2	36	21	43	58	16	26	75	8	17
43. That Jesus will come again to judge all mankind, both living and dead?	78	2	20	15	7	78	74	11	15	83	0	17	98	1	1	46	10	44	59	16	25	75	5	20
44. That there will be one final day of judgment for all who have lived upon earth?	74	4	22	15	10	75	54	18	28	73	7	20	98	0	2	40	9	51	47	18	35	65	8	27
45. That death and suffering were brought into the world by the disobedience of Adam and Eve?	72	0	28	17	5	78	50	4	46	77	3	20	97	2	1	34	6	60	47	10	43	70	5	25
46. In a visible bodily second coming of Jesus to establish a reign of righteousness on earth?	59	17	24	14	7	79	54	14	32	58	12	30	45	8	47	20	9	71	36	16	48	64	5	31
47. That man was originally in a state of complete moral perfection which he lost by his disobedience and fall?	72	4	24	20	2	78	52	7	41	71	7	22	97	2	1	40	10	50	53	11	36	74	5	21
48. That forgiveness of sin is essential and required for one to be in right relationship to God?	98	0	2	97	3	0	93	4	3	98	2	0	100	0	0	98	1	1	98	2	0	97	0	3
49. That all men, being sons of Adam, are born with natures wholly perverse, sinful and depraved?	67	0	33	14	5	81	27	0	73	61	7	32	98	1	1	26	4	70	43	6	51	75	5	20
50. That prayer has the power to change conditions in nature—such as drought?	78	11	11	17	15	68	61	14	25	69	8	23	94	2	4	46	19	35	57	16	27	83	3	14
51. That prayer for others directly affects their lives whether or not they know that such prayer is being offered?	96	0	4	64	14	22	89	11	0	83	12	5	94	5	1	72	16	12	87	4	9	85	5	10

TABLE III. THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION, SHOWN BY DENOMINATIONS

DO YOU BELIEVE—	Baptist			Congregational			Episcopalian			Evangelical			Lutheran			Methodist			Presbyterian			All Others		
	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
52. That God now acts upon, or operates in human lives through the agency and person of the Holy Spirit?	98	0	2	81	2	17	96	0	4	100	0	0	100	0	0	90	1	9	98	0	2	88	3	9
53. That in order to become a Christian it is necessary and essential to participate in the sacraments, such as baptism or the Lord's Supper?	35	0	65	7	5	88	74	7	19	53	2	45	88	2	10	21	7	72	39	6	55	40	5	50
54. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus?	59	2	39	7	2	91	43	4	53	46	5	49	92	5	3	20	5	75	18	4	78	70	3	27
55. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to belong to the church?	41	2	57	9	5	86	74	7	19	46	5	49	85	4	11	20	10	70	28	9	63	55	0	45
56. That regardless of creed or personal belief persons who love God and do justly with their fellowmen are worthy of acceptance into the Christian Church?	43	2	55	87	0	13	50	4	46	63	10	27	19	0	81	81	4	15	65	13	22	35	8	57

It has been freely argued in religious circles that church unity or federation can never be had on the basis of belief because of irreconcilable differences. Insofar as the ministers whose beliefs are set forth in this study are representative of the seven major denominations it would be much nearer the truth to say that *disunity cannot be defended on the ground of differences of belief.* For in point after point of belief greater differences are shown between individual ministers of the same denomination than between totals for different denominations. The Lutherans are the sole denomination which makes a definite showing for a unified position on creed.

In the main, therefore, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and others have no ground of creed on which to demand separate denominational organizations for week-day or vacation church schools, or for Sunday schools for that matter. The working creed of individual churches within a single denomination (based on the creed of the clergy) is likely to differ at least as much as between denominations.

CHAPTER III

THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL AS A SOURCE OF BELIEF

THE ministers whose beliefs were reported in the preceding chapter were all in charge of churches. Their ages ran from the twenties to the seventies. Many of them were probably stating religious positions arrived at years ago when thought currents were running in quite different channels from those of to-day. Let us therefore look to a younger group to discover what their leadership may promise on matters of belief. Let us go to the theological schools and inquire what the ministers who are to shape the policies of the church a decade ahead are now thinking concerning the basic problems of faith.

Table IV represents a summary of the answers returned to the 56 questions already dealt with, by 200 students of five theological seminaries of three denominations. In order not to embarrass schools or ecclesiastical authorities the names of both institutions and denominations are withheld. Suffice it to say that the schools are of national importance and renown and the denominations recognized as of first importance in numbers and influence. The table should be read: *Point 1*, That God exists is believed

by 100% of both groups. *Point 2*, On the question whether God is three distinct persons in one, 44% of students as against 80% of ministers-in-service accept this view; 21% of students as against 7% of ministers are uncertain; 35% of students as against 13% of ministers disbelieve the proposition. Similarly for all other points of the list.

TABLE IV. THE BELIEFS OF 200 THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS OF THREE DENOMINATIONS COMPARED WITH THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION[1]

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
1. That God exists?	*100* **100**	*0* **0**	*0* **0**
2. That God is three distinct persons in one?	*80* **44**	*7* **21**	*13* **35**
3. That God is omnipotent?	*87* **64**	*4* **7**	*9* **29**
4. That the relation of God to man is best expressed in the word "Father"?	*98* **98**	*1* **2**	*1* **0**
5. That God is unchangeable?	*79* **38**	*9* **18**	*12* **44**
6. That the idea of evolution is consistent with belief in God as Creator?	*61* **94**	*6* **4**	*33* **2**
7. That the creation of the world occurred in the manner and time recorded in Genesis?	*47* **5**	*5* **6**	*48* **89**
8. That God leaves the universe wholly to the control of law without controlling it in person?	*10* **13**	*6* **11**	*84* **76**
9. That the idea of evolution is a denial of man's having been created by God in his own image?	*33* **8**	*4* **5**	*63* **87**
10. That God occasionally sets aside law, thus performing a miracle?	*68* **24**	*8* **16**	*24* **60**
11. That pain and suffering were provided by God for our good?	*50* **34**	*14* **23**	*36* **43**
12. That the Devil exists as an actual being?	*60* **9**	*7* **9**	*33* **82**
13. That God is a being with personal attributes, complete and perfect in all moral qualities?	*95* **77**	*1* **10**	*4* **13**
14. That in Bible times God manifested himself to persons in a manner which no longer occurs?	*56* **13**	*6* **8**	*38* **79**

[1] Numbers in italics in this table represent the percentage of beliefs of the 500 ministers (carried over from Table I) restated here for purposes of comparison.

TABLE IV. THE BELIEFS OF 200 THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS OF THREE DENOMINATIONS COMPARED WITH THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
15. That the Bible was written by men chosen and supernaturally endowed by God for that purpose, and by him given the exact message they were to write?	*55* 8	*2* 1	*43* 91
16. That the New Testament is, and always will remain, the final revelation of the will of God to men?	*66* 18	*10* 13	*24* 69
17. That if any part of the Bible should be found to be in conflict with the spirit and teachings of Jesus it should be rejected as not binding on us?	*77* 72	*4* 8	*19* 20
18. That the Old Testament prophets had divinely inspired knowledge by which they were able to predict future events?	*67* 22	*5* 12	*28* 66
19. That the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah were literally fulfilled in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus?	*72* 27	*4* 12	*24* 61
20. That the inspiration that resulted in the writing of the Bible is different from that of other great religious literature?	*70* 26	*5* 6	*25* 68
21. That every part of the Bible is of equal validity and authority with every other part?	*34* 2	*4* 1	*62* 97
22. That the Bible is wholly free from legend or myth?	*38* 4	*7* 1	*55* 95
23. That the principles of criticism and evaluation applied to other literature and history should be applied to the Bible?	*67* 88	*5* 5	*28* 7
24. That the New Testament is the absolute and infallible standard by which all religious creeds or beliefs among men should be judged as to their truth and validity?	*77* 33	*3* 12	*20* 55

TABLE IV. THE BELIEFS OF 200 THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS OF THREE DENOMINATIONS COMPARED WITH THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
25. That the selection and collection of the sacred books known as the Bible was by the direct will and authority of God, and is infallibly correct as determining what should be the content of the Bible?	*54* **7**	*8* **4**	*38* **89**
26. That Jesus was born of a virgin without a human father?	*71* **25**	*10* **24**	*19* **51**
27. That Jesus, while upon earth, was as truly subject to temptation as were other men?	*97* **97**	*1* **0**	*2* **3**
28. That in his life upon earth Jesus met all his problems and difficulties using only those powers and resources available to other men?	*74* **81**	*6* **10**	*20* **9**
29. That Jesus lived a life wholly blameless and without sin or wrongdoing?	*92* **75**	*4* **16**	*4* **9**
30. That Jesus is equal in power, knowledge, and authority with God?	*76* **44**	*5* **19**	*19* **37**
31. That Jesus, when upon earth, was subject to limitations of knowledge about the earth and scientific facts in general, characteristic of his day?	*58* **73**	*9* **11**	*33* **16**
32. That while upon earth Jesus possessed and used the power to restore the dead to life?	*82* **45**	*9* **28**	*9* **27**
33. That Jesus' death on the cross was the one act which made possible the remission of man's sins?	*70* **29**	*6* **10**	*24* **61**
34. That after Jesus was dead and buried he actually rose from the dead, leaving the tomb empty?	*84* **42**	*4* **27**	*12* **31**
35. That after a period had elapsed following his death and resurrection Jesus was seen by his disciples and friends ascending into heaven?	*84* **45**	*6* **23**	*10* **32**

TABLE IV. THE BELIEFS OF 200 THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS OF THREE DENOMINATIONS COMPARED WITH THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
36. That Jesus is now interceding with the Father for us?	*82* **46**	*8* **27**	*10* **27**
37. That heaven exists as an actual place or location?	*57* **11**	*15* **20**	*28* **69**
38. That hell exists as an actual place or location?	*53* **11**	*13* **13**	*34* **76**
39. That there is a continuance of life after death?	*97* **89**	*2* **7**	*1* **4**
40. In the resurrection of the body?	*62* **18**	*5* **13**	*33* **69**
41. That a considerable part of the human race will suffer eternal punishment because of their rejection of Christ?	*61* **20**	*9* **24**	*30* **56**
42. That each person's status for eternity is forever fixed and determined by his spiritual status at the time of his death?	*58* **18**	*12* **24**	*30* **58**
43. That Jesus will come again to judge all mankind, both living and dead?	*66* **25**	*7* **23**	*27* **52**
44. That there will be one final day of judgment for all who have lived upon earth?	*60* **17**	*8* **16**	*32* **77**
45. That death and suffering were brought into the world by the disobedience of Adam and Eve?	*60* **13**	*4* **8**	*36* **79**
46. In a visible bodily second coming of Jesus to establish a reign of righteousness on earth?	*40* **8**	*11* **17**	*49* **75**
47. That man was originally in a state of complete moral perfection which he lost by his disobedience and fall?	*61* **18**	*6* **12**	*33* **70**
48. That forgiveness of sin is essential and required for one to be in right relationship to God?	*98* **92**	*1* **4**	*1* **4**

TABLE IV. THE BELIEFS OF 200 THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS FROM FIVE SCHOOLS OF THREE DENOMINATIONS COMPARED WITH THE BELIEFS OF 500 MINISTERS ON 56 POINTS OF RELIGION—*Continued*

	Belief	Uncertainty	Disbelief
	%	%	%
DO YOU BELIEVE—			
49. That all men, being sons of Adam, are born with natures wholly perverse, sinful and depraved?	*53* **13**	*4* **7**	*43* **80**
50. That prayer has the power to change conditions in nature—such as drought?	*64* **21**	*11* **22**	*25* **57**
51. That prayer for others directly affects their lives whether or not they know that such prayer is being offered?	*83* **58**	*9* **25**	*8* **17**
52. That God now acts upon, or operates in, human lives through the agency and person of the Holy Spirit?	*94* **82**	*1* **11**	*5* **7**
53. That in order to become a Christian it is necessary and essential to participate in the sacraments, such as baptism or the Lord's Supper?	*44* **14**	*5* **8**	*51* **78**
54. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to believe in the virgin birth of Jesus?	*46* **3**	*4* **5**	*50* **92**
55. That in order to be a Christian it is necessary and essential to belong to the church?	*44* **16**	*6* **4**	*50* **80**
56. That, regardless of creed or personal belief, persons who love God and do justly with their fellow men are worthy of acceptance into the Christian Church?	*56* **85**	*5* **4**	*39* **11**

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MINISTERS AND STUDENTS

One of the first differences noted between ministers and students is in the aggregate of their faith, so to speak, as shown by the relative proportions of each

group expressing belief, disbelief and uncertainty on the various items as stated. For ministers the average proportion expressing belief on the 56 items (column 1) is 67%; for students, 39%. For ministers the average proportion expressing disbelief (column 3) is 27%; for students, 49%. For ministers the average proportion expressing uncertainty (column 2) is 6%; for students, 12%.

As compared with the ministers the beliefs of these students reflect a more distinct drift away from the older or orthodox positions and a tendency to be in accord with the scientific thought of the day.

Like the ministers all accept as fact the existence of God. Less than half, however (44%), accept the doctrine of the Trinity, against 80% of the ministers. Nor do the students believe in an unchangeable God, 44% either denying this concept or expressing uncertainty. The Genesis account of creation is literal fact to only 5% of this group, while 47% of the ministers approve the view. Less than one fourth of the proportion of students as compared with ministers believe that God in Bible times manifested himself in a manner that no longer occurs.

The idea of evolution contains no offense to most of these students, only 8% seeing in it a denial of man having been created in the image of God, while 33% of the ministers find in the idea such a denial.

Theological students take little stock in an actual devil, only 9% (as against 60% of the ministers) holding such a belief. Neither do they include in large proportion in their faith either a hell or a heaven as an actual place, only 11% accepting this view in either case (as against about five times this proportion for ministers). The resurrection of the body is denied by more than two thirds (69%) of the students, with 13% more in doubt, though 89% believe in a life after death.

A seeming inconsistency obtains in the fact that while 89% evidently accept the evolutionary view of creation only 13% believe that the universe is now wholly controlled by impersonal law rather than by God in person. About one student in four accepts the idea of miracles in the sense of the setting aside of law (as against nearly three times this proportion of ministers).

That the writing of the Bible was due to unique inspiration is positively denied by nine theological students out of ten of this group, more than twice the proportion that holds for the ministers. Nor for more than two out of three of them is the New Testament the final revelation of the will of God to man. About the same proportion do not believe that the Old Testament prophets were able to foretell the coming of Jesus or predict future events in general. Their skepticism or uncertainty on this point is nearly three times as prevalent as that among the ministers. That all parts of the Bible are of equal

authority practically none believe. Only one third of them accept the New Testament as the infallible standard by which religious creeds are to be judged. The Bible is a very different book to the theological student from what it is to the more conservative minister.

More than half of these students deny the virgin birth, and four fifths believe that Jesus while on earth met his problems and difficulties using only those powers and resources available to other men. The students are nearly evenly divided on the question whether Jesus is equal in power, knowledge, and authority with God. One fourth of the group either disbelieve or are uncertain that Jesus lived a life wholly blameless and without sin, a position which to most persons will seem a denial of his divinity. More than half deny or are uncertain that Jesus possessed and used the power to restore the dead to life, thus flatly contradicting the New Testament account. Nearly three out of four (71%) deny or are uncertain about the substitutionary atonement: 58% deny or are uncertain that Jesus actually arose from the dead, leaving an empty tomb; and 75% do not believe that there will be a second bodily coming. So far from the traditional beliefs have these younger leaders gone.

The story of Adam and Eve is accepted by only 13% of these theological students (by 60% of ministers), man's fall by 18%, total depravity by 13% (by 53% of ministers). This rejection of the theory of essential evil at the bottom

of human nature is fraught with large implications for the future program of the church.

One out of five of the student group believes that prayer can change conditions in nature (ministers three times this proportion), and nearly three out of five that it can affect the lives of those prayed for.

Taken as a whole, it is evident, as before stated, that theological students differ with each other much more on matters of belief than do ministers. Conceivably this may be due to youth and inexperience. But since these students were all in graduate schools of religion, many of them having been responsible for churches, this hardly seems plausible. The difference may be due to a tendency to independent thought as against the discipline of an ecclesiastical agency. It may even be due to the fact that students are the product of a generation more given to the scientific approach to life than were their predecessors. Whatever be the explanation it is evident that for these students orthodoxy in the old sense of the term simply does not exist. The older creeds will not serve or hold them. Though unrecognized by ecclesiastical authority new creeds are definitely forming.

It is also evident that for guidance in what particular beliefs we should teach our children we can go to this group as a whole even less than to the older ministers, for they differ so widely that, as a group, they offer no norm.

CHAPTER IV

AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM

(With Tentative Steps Toward Its Solution)

HERE, then, is the situation that confronts parents, teachers, and religious educators. There is a psychological need for belief on the part of the individual. There is, therefore, an educational need for belief as one element in religious instruction. We must guide our children in arriving at helpful beliefs on certain fundamental questions which are sure to arise, which are closely related to personal happiness and serenity, and which in a greater or less degree influence personality and character.

The beliefs which the young are to attain need not, as before indicated, be taught them as formal creedal statements. This is not the way belief arises. Such a process is more likely to result in the mere memorizing of verbal forms without any of the sense of meaning and the emotional warmth which accompany true belief. Probably the best way to arrive at beliefs is by association with persons who hold them. If belief is reached through instruction, it should come gradually out of the whole system of teaching rather than from single isolated

dogmas. What the teacher accepts as truth on great fundamentals is quite certain ultimately to crop out in the course of his instruction. Children may and do get their beliefs unconsciously from others. Beliefs thus developed are then or later subjected to the tests of personal experience and of reason. It is out of these three sources, personal contacts and instruction, tests of experience, and tests of reason, that one's system of beliefs finally emerges. And as long as these three sources, or any of them, are changing, so long will one's beliefs be undergoing change. There is no static system of belief for any except dormant minds.

A Minimum Statement of Belief

In chapters II and III we have already seen what difficulties confront us when we turn to the professional class of religionists, the clergy, to find what beliefs we should offer the young. Let us pause here for an additional question or two concerning the help available from this source of authority. Let us see exactly what beliefs we should find it possible to teach on the basis of complete agreement among the 700 ministers of our inquiry. Just *one*, as follows:

There is a supreme being; God exists. This is the single point on which all agree.

Now, suppose we inquire what beliefs we may teach with the authority of *three out of four* of the 700 ministers

supporting us. There are just 11 items out of the original 56:[1]

1. There is a supreme being; God exists (100%).
3. God is omnipotent (80%).
4. God's relation to man is that of Father (98%).
8. God controls the universe through his personal presence and power (82%).
13. God is a being with personal attributes, complete and perfect in all moral qualities (90%).
27. Jesus while on earth was subject to temptation as are other men (97%).
28. Jesus met his problems and difficulties using only those powers and resources available to all men (76%).
29. Jesus lived a life on earth without sin (87%).
39. Life continues after death (95%).
48. Forgiveness of sin is essential to a right relationship with God (96%).
52. God operates on human lives through the agency and person of the Holy Spirit (91%).

This list is not so bad. It gives us God, the Father, omnipotent. From the psychological point of view the concept making God's presence in human lives depend (No. 52) on the intermediary of the Holy Spirit is a difficult one to grasp and use. The list gives us Jesus living a human life on earth using only the powers and resources available to all, yet without sin. It provides for a future

[1] Numbers preceding items correspond to numbers on the original list as in Chapters II and III.

life for man, and declares the necessity for forgiveness of sin. It gives us a universe with God personally at work in it.

The three areas of experience spoken of in Chapter I in which insistent questions arise—*God*, man's *destiny*, the *universe*—are all included in this list. Some may wish more or different items in each of these areas, but fundamentals are at least touched upon. Some will think too much is included.

Note, however, that in order to obtain just these eleven points of belief with a backing of three fourths of the ministers it was necessary to combine theological students with working clergy. If only the latter alone were considered on the basis of three-fourths majority to approve each particular belief the number of beliefs we should adopt would be almost exactly doubled; for this method would add 10 points to the 11 already stated and subtract one of the original number. The new points added would give us:

2. The Trinity (80%).
5. An unchangeable God (79%).
17. Rejection of any part of Bible found in conflict with the teachings of Jesus (77%).
24. The New Testament as an infallible standard of creeds and beliefs (77%).
30. Jesus equal in power, knowledge and authority with God. (76%).
32. Jesus restoring the dead to life (82%).

34. Jesus rising physically from the dead (84%).
35. Bodily ascension of Jesus into heaven (84%).
36. Jesus now interceding for us with God (82%).
51. Prayer affecting the lives of those prayed for (83%).

From the list of eleven items secured from the two groups combined there would be subtracted:

28. Jesus meeting his earthly powers and difficulties with only the powers and resources available to all men (74%).

If the 200 theological students alone should be taken as a guide to belief on all points where three out of four agree, they would add the following to the list of 11 items secured from students and ministers combined:

6. Evolution consistent with idea of God as Creator (94%).
23. The same principles of criticism and evaluation to be applied to the Bible as to other literature and history (88%).
56. Regardless of creed or belief those who love God and do justly with their fellow men to be counted worthy of acceptance into the church (85%).

By their disbeliefs these students would subtract:

8. God's control of the universe through his personal presence and power (76%).

A careful examination of the first list of eleven points and of the additions and subtractions that would occur if either the working clergy or the students were taken alone as a guide will tend to convince some that the best

results come from the two groups combined. The students rob the universe of the oversight of a personal God. The working clergy add a goodly number of beliefs whose relation to the average mind's questioning is not so apparent as those of the combined list.

Psychological Tests of Belief

Religion itself is as much a product of social evolution as is democracy, education or industrialism. The social process as a whole is greater than religion just as any whole is greater than one of its parts. A religion which possesses dynamic is sure to influence social development, but is in turn modified by it. And no religion as practiced by the mass rises higher than the social ethic of its times.

Growing out of human experience, out of knowledge of life and of the universe, out of reason, certain beliefs have been evolved. While there are and will probably always remain wide differences on certain problems, the great majority of Christians are reasonably agreed on a few basic beliefs concerning God, human life, and the universe. These (perhaps because of their origin in the crises of human experience), in general, meet the tests of psychological and educational validity and usefulness, and should therefore become a part of the religious instruction of the young; not as formal creeds to be memorized, but as accepted truths to be built into a philosophy of life.

From the psychological point of view, that is, from the standpoint of service rendered to the individual, a belief is valid when, and only when, it meets certain conditions:

(1) It must not contradict proved knowledge.
(2) It must not contradict reason.
(3) It must accord with the best known ideals of individual and social conduct.
(4) It must appeal to positive rather than negative motives: love, loyalty, devotion instead of fear, dread, hate.
(5) It must possess functional significance—it must *matter* in producing mental serenity, in defining right ways of living, in motivating ethical conduct.

Beliefs differ vastly when measured by these standards. For example, the Genesis account of creation violates number *1* in that it contradicts proved knowledge. The concept of God existing as three distinct Persons, yet one, will seem to some persons (but not to all) to run counter to number *2*. A standing threat of a burning hell opposes number *4*, for it appeals to emotions of fear and dread. Belief about the parentage of Jesus *matters* less as related to the criteria of number *5* than belief about the resources with which Jesus met his life problems and the manner of his living. Belief about the manner of creation matters less than belief about whether a benign God is back of it.

With the exception of the last and possibly the eighth of the eleven beliefs (page 63) representing three-fourths-

or-more agreement by the 700 ministers (page 62) this list seems to accord reasonably well with the five points stated. The concept (last of list) of the Holy Spirit as the agency through which God manifests himself to human lives is a stumbling-block to some but has a very precious meaning to others. Whether (eighth of list) Jesus lived wholly without sin or wrongdoing is perhaps not of ultimate significance in view of the magnificent greatness of his life as a whole. Leaving out of account these two points, we may say of the others: They do not contradict proved knowledge or run seriously counter to reason. They lead toward ethical conduct. They appeal to the positive motives. They encourage serenity and a hopeful outlook on life. They matter.

Some Practical Considerations

If modern Christianity could make a new and simpler definition of its faith, many practical advantages would be secured. Let us note but two:

1. *The belief factor in the religious education of the young could be made much more effective.* As matters now stand the child is in some denominations taught an elaborate system of beliefs in the form of a catechism, a procedure which educators tell us is contrary to good psychology as applied to learning. In other cases, while the instruction may not take the form of a catechism, it is expected and desired that at least as many points of

doctrine as those represented in our inquiry shall develop out of the child's religious instruction. Where this is the case it is practically inevitable that some points of view will be taught which then or later are almost sure to be found in conflict with knowledge or reason. When such contradictions arise there is a practical certainty that confidence shall be shaken in the whole structure of belief, greatly to the religious detriment of the individual. One indisputable educational principle should govern: *Never teach the child what later as an intelligent person he must unlearn.*

2. *A simple creed would relieve the preacher of an embarrassing problem.* Judging from the returns from this inquiry many ministers must hesitate to preach all they believe. One distinguished preacher asserts that he does not believe in the resurrection of the body. "What, then, do you do when you lead your congregation on a Sunday morning in the reciting of the Apostles' Creed?" he was asked. "I say the words, but with mental reservations," was his reply.

Another minister confesses that when he comes to the words, "born of the Virgin Mary," in the Creed he drops out while the passage is being repeated. A third, a young man of stern integrity, is concerned over a difficult problem he meets in his pulpit. "I am not in accord," he says, "with some of the beliefs held by a considerable proportion of my congregation. If these differences were

on beliefs relating to incidental matters, I could simply avoid the topics and let it go at that. As it happens, however, several of the points deal with things which I consider vital. Shall I preach what I believe? If I do, I shall disturb and offend many of my congregation. Incidentally, I shall also bring myself under suspicion with my ecclesiastical superiors."

Thousands of preachers of whom these cases are typical find themselves facing such troublesome dilemmas. Such dilemmas have horns. If the preachers take one horn, they can be intellectually honest, but they are obliged to run counter to tradition and authority. If they take the other, they can avoid conflict and trouble, but probably at the cost of losing something of high value to the qualities of their own character and personality and so to their preaching.

One recent case: A young theological student is before the examining board of his church seeking admission into the preaching ministry. They ask him questions calculated to reveal the quality of his religious beliefs. He is aware that the members of the board are orthodox in their positions, and that they will expect him to show reasonable orthodoxy as a condition of his admission. But on several matters he knows he is not orthodox. Shall he shade his answers a little and so avoid disagreement and unpleasantness, perhaps exclusion? Self-respect or conscience or honor or some such aspect of mind

saves him, and when the moot question comes he answers calmly but firmly in accordance with his belief. The examiners are perturbed; they question further; they remonstrate; they explain why he is wrong, giving exposition of the Scriptures to prove their point. Finally, after much discussion they suggest that he recant, the implication being clear that this is the price of admission. But this young man is of heroic mold and simply says: "I am sorry. I have told you what I believe." The candidate is asked to retire while the examiners deliberate. After a time he is sent for and the chairman announces: "Mr. Brown, you are a heretic, but you are honest and we are going to take a chance and admit you. May the Lord have mercy on you and show you the error of your ways." Mr. Brown is now admitted to the ministry of his church, but he well knows that his dangers from ecclesiastical discipline are not over.

It is, of course, evident that the more complex the creed the more impossible for all to accept it as a whole. This very fact keeps a large proportion of the church hypersensitive where matters of belief are concerned, and greatly encourages heresy hunting. It is not a good thing for the self-respect of any person to be obliged too often to participate in a statement of purported truth which he does not accept, while at the same time satisfying his own conscience with "mental reservations." It is not a good thing for a preacher constantly to be

obliged to guard his preaching so that he may not offend his listeners or run counter to ecclesiastical authority. When will we learn that belief is a *means* and not an *end* in religion?

Tentative Recommendations

In view of all the preceding facts and discussion the writer offers the following tentative suggestions concerning the problem of belief as a part of religious education:

1. No denomination of those concerned in our study, with the possible exception of the Lutherans, has any right to demand of its lay adherents or include in their religious instruction more than the simplest form of creed. For beyond this the clergy, professed spiritual leaders and standard, do not themselves agree.

2. Such a creed dealing with a few great areas of experience, such as God and his attributes, man, his life and destiny, the universe and its control, would have very general acceptance among major denominations.

3. A brief, simple creed such as this would for most persons meet the universal psychological need for religious belief. Individual differences of belief beyond this simple minimum could develop as experience or reason might dictate.

4. The Apostles' Creed or any similar creed, containing elements, as it does, upon which there is very general disagreement, might well be omitted from the instruction of the young, from use in church services and

from requirement for admission into church membership.

5. Recognizing the wide diversity of belief on the part of intelligent persons, no individual or sect has the right to enforce on the young beliefs peculiar to that individual or sect. It is idle to argue against this that "truth is not reached by majority vote." That is conceded. But the trouble here is that the minority has no demonstrable proof of its tenets any more than has the majority. If it had there would no longer be a question of *belief* but of *knowledge*, which would of course settle the whole question.

6. It is time that the Christian forces should give practical proof of their desire for closer unity by having a commission of scholars formulate anew the minimum essentials of belief. With the sectarian tensions strong as they still are it may seem an idle dream to state it, but nevertheless the creed formulated should ignore all denominational interests, all claims of various schools of doctrine, all traditional lines of emphasis and seek only to determine what religious beliefs represent the common elements growing out of universal *human experience*, *proved knowledge*, and *reasoned conclusion*.

7. In the meantime look upon belief for what it really is: one single instrument in the development of a religious individual or society; a matter upon which earnest minds are sure to differ and upon which none has the slightest warrant for being arrogant or intolerant. The honest agnostic seeking for truth is much preferable to the

militant dogmatist who demands that all men accept as truth what he believes.

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